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**Cc:** Plevin, Lisa[Plevin.Lisa@epa.gov]  
**From:** Mears, Mary  
**Sent:** Tue 3/24/2015 1:29:16 PM  
**Subject:** Delaware Journal News

Hi Judith:

Just FYI, this reporter's interest is focused on the family, who are reported to be close friends with Del Senator Coons. I am not sure we have much updated information to give the reporter, but his number is (302) 324-2785. See his latest article below.

Please let me know what updates you give him, as I want to be consistent. Much of the updated information I have seen is enforcement confidential as we continue our investigation.

## **Pesticide poisons Del. family in Caribbean**



Cris Barrish, The (Delaware) News Journal 7:58 a.m. EDT March 24, 2015

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A top Tatnall School administrator and his family suffered serious pesticide "poisoning" in their luxury condo while vacationing in the U.S. Virgin Islands last week, according to federal environmental officials and a Wilmington attorney who spent time with them on St. John.

Steve Esmond, the head of Tatnall's middle school, his wife, Dr. Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons "were seriously exposed to a highly toxic chemical at their rental condominium," said James J. Maron, the lawyer from Wilmington who is acting as the family spokesman.

The family, who live in Wilmington, is in the process of being airlifted back to the United States and all except Devine are in critical condition, Maron said.

The suspected source of the poisoning is methyl bromide, which might have been used to fumigate a room at the Sirenusa resort where the family was staying, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in a news release late Monday afternoon.

Methyl bromide is restricted in the United States due to its "acute toxicity," the EPA release said. "Only certified applicators are allowed to use it in certain agricultural settings and it is not authorized for use in dwellings. Health effects of acute exposure to methyl bromide are serious and include central nervous system and respiratory system damage."

The EPA release said agency officials would "ensure that appropriate steps are taken if

it determines any environmental regulations or laws were violated."

"Protecting people's health in the U.S. Virgin Islands is of paramount importance," said Judith A. Enck, the agency's regional administrator. The agency is trying to determine "how this happened and will make sure steps are taken to prevent this from happening to others at these vacation apartments or elsewhere."

Esmond and Devine are both 49, and their sons are in 11th and ninth grade, respectively, at Tatnall - a prestigious private school in Greenville. Devine is a dentist who practices in Broomall, Pennsylvania, about 25 miles northeast of Wilmington.

Maron said U.S. Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, who knows the Esmond family, is assisting them in their return to the United States.

Maron, who notified The News Journal Monday about the family's misfortune, said they traveled last week to St. John, a Caribbean island known for its natural beauty and beaches. St. John is a U.S. territory.

Esmond and his family were staying at the Sirenusa complex in the Capri villa, an \$800-a-night hilltop condo in an enclave overlooking Cruz Bay. Other Delaware families, including the Marons, also were in St. John and socialized with the Esmonds, Maron said.

The Capri is one of 22 Sirenusa villas managed and marketed by Sea Glass Vacations, according to its Internet listing. David Adams, an official with Sea Glass Vacations, said Monday he was meeting with other officials to determine what he could say.

Maron said the chemicals the family was exposed to "bio-accumulated and metabolized until it became an acute poisoning."

Over the weekend, he said, the family "began having seizures in the middle of the night and their lungs stopped working. They all had to be intubated. This is serious stuff."

Coons' office did not immediately comment on the Delaware senator's role in helping the stricken family, but spokesman Sean Coit said the senator "and his family are longtime, close friends of the Esmonds."

Maron said Coons was able to facilitate the EPA's involvement in the situation.

Charles A. Tierney, Tatnall's head of school, said a relative of Esmond told him Sunday that the family was "exposed to some sort of poisoning and their condition was described as critical but stable."

Tierney sent out a notice Sunday to families at the school and said the community has offered whatever support Esmond and his family need.

Tierney described Esmond as a "great school person" who has been head of the middle school, which serves about 130 fifth- to eighth-graders, for the last decade. Esmond has been at Tatnall for 26 years, and has been a high school history teacher and head football coach.

"In many ways this is hard to fathom," Tierney said. "It's really so unbelievable. We are all rallying together behind the Esmonds and sending them our prayers and healing wishes."

**Contact senior investigative reporter Cris Barrish at (302) 324-2785, [cbarrish@delawareonline.com](mailto:cbarrish@delawareonline.com), on Facebook or Twitter [@crisbarrish](https://twitter.com/crisbarrish).**

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